

Retiring Barren Co. ATC principal Hal B. Toms understands responsibility, work ethic, service to country, and the real value of vocational education

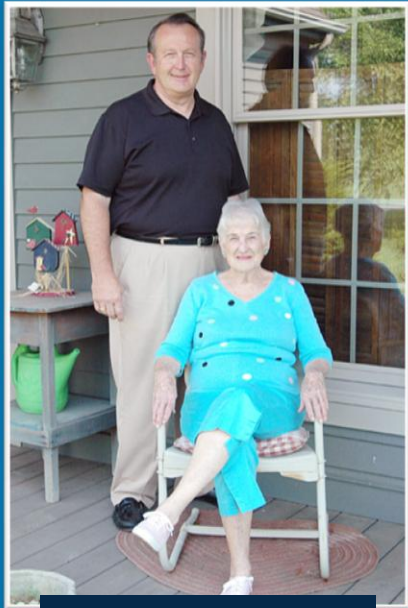


From an early age, Hal B. Toms learned the importance of responsibility, developing a good work ethic, and becoming a skilled tradesman. While learning a skill certainly had its advantages, joining the army and going on to attain higher education degrees rounded out the young man from Park City, KY. Over the years, all of his skills, education, and experiences have served him well. The skills he learned as a young man will once again benefit him – this time his automotive technology proficiencies will not only provide enjoyment in something he cherishes; but it will also allow him to continue to make a good living in retirement. He has come full circle and still believes in the real value of vocational education and making a living using hands-on skills.



Born to Les and Ruth Toms, Hal was the second of two sons. His brother Philip was born three and a half years earlier and served as somewhat of an inspiration in terms of looking up to an older brother. Both men learned about work ethic, family values, and service to their country as a result of a tightly knit hard working family, a father who not only served in the army, but also owned a business in bulk oil and gas; and a mother who held everyone's feet to the fire. Following in their father's footsteps, both Hal and his brother served in the military which accented an appreciation of order, authority, and preparedness.

"Pop was one of those guys who always delivered on what he said...and, I guess that's where I get it," says Toms.



Hal and mother Ruth.

The family was no stranger to hard work. His grandfather opened a blacksmith shop in 1914 that later became the Gulf Oil and Service Station in Park City. Over time, there were four different Toms' who owned garages. At the age of 10, Hal began working by

scrubbing (cleaning) engine parts for his dad's delivery trucks. Through this process, he learned a lot about engine parts and later became interested in tearing down and rebuilding engines. Working in the family business and having his father as a positive role model were the fuel that helped direct his individual accomplishments toward a successful career.



Now in his own garage, Toms poses with the Gulf sign that was used in his grandfather's service station.

When Toms was a senior in high school, he enrolled in the automotive technology program at the Barren County Area Vocational Education Center (presently referred to as KY Tech-Barren County Area Technology Center). It is the same school that he will retire from as principal on August 1, 2011.

As a student, he joined VICA (Vocational Industrial Clubs of America), now called SkillsUSA, and served as the club treasurer. Not only could he compete in an area that held great interest to him; he learned more about leadership by serving as a local officer.

Page taken from the 1977 Barren County High School Yearbook.

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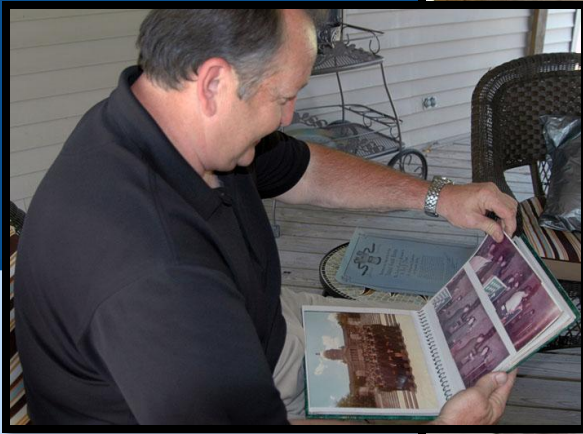


LEFT TO RIGHT: Tammy Murray; Secretary, Tammy Fowler; Treasurer, Tammy Fisher; Vice President, Tricia Dean; Secretary, Barbara Peden; Reporter, Becky Rigney; Parliamentarian, Hal Toms; Treasurer, Gary Davidson; President, Mr. Harlow; Sponsor.

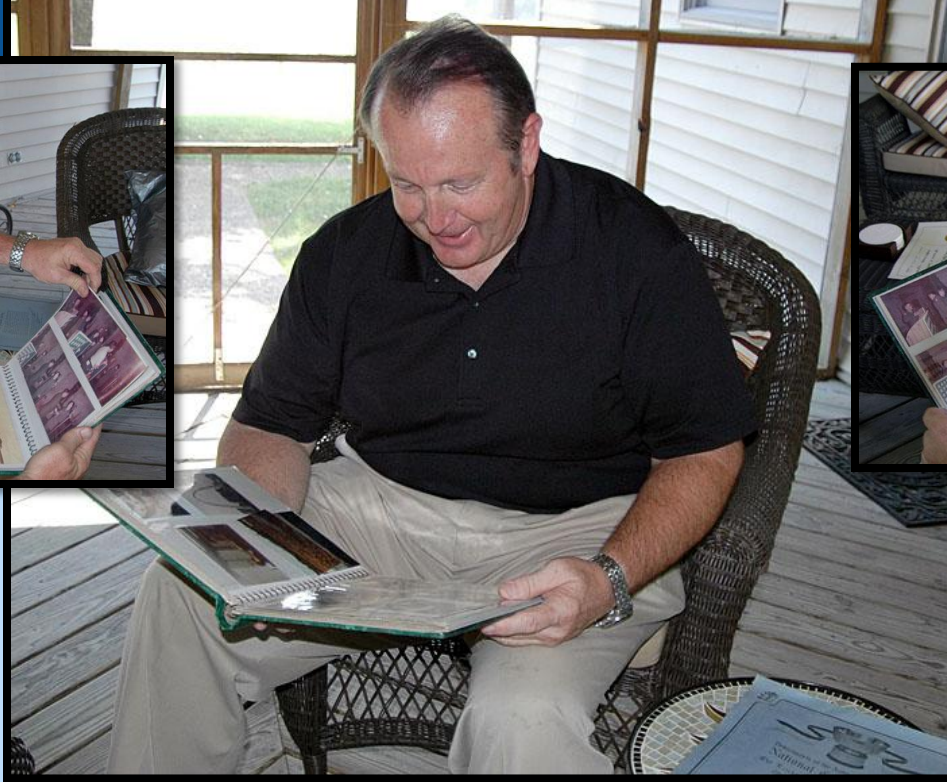
At the time, Mr. Joe Harlow was the automotive technology instructor and served as his VICA sponsor. Because of the importance and value of his own experience, Toms has always been an avid supporter of student organizations in his school.

At left: Winning results from regional and state SkillsUSA Kentucky competitive events are always posted in the halls at the KY Tech- Barren Co. ATC. Toms poses with this year's posters.





Toms looks over one of his military photo albums and reminisces about some of the many accomplishments he achieved in the service.



In 1977 Toms graduated from Barren County High School. He entered Western Kentucky University (WKU) and in 1982 graduated with a bachelor of science degree in industrial education. While at WKU, he enlisted in the Kentucky Army National Guard (KANG) in 1981. After completing basic training in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, he became a fire direction control specialist. His major responsibility was to direct soldiers where to point and shoot artillery guns.

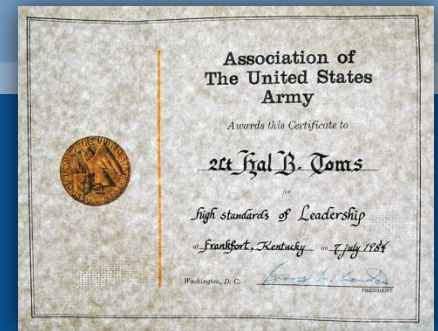
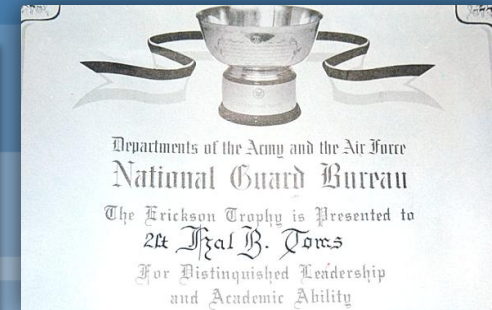
Toms was extremely satisfied in the military and even thought of making it his career. In 1983, he was accepted into officers' candidate school. He was commissioned as a 2nd Lt. in the KANG in July 1984. Individuals who become commissioned must go to school for a specialty area and Toms' specialty was artillery. By December 1984, he had completed the Field Artillery Officers Basic

Course and was made a field artillery officer. Toms joined the 1st BN 623 Field Artillery headquartered in Glasgow because it was close to home and his father had been in the same unit. During that time, he was trained on all types of cannons and chose the self propelled Howitzer as his specialty.

“My dad worked 14 years full-time as a mechanic in the guard,” said Toms. “My brother served as a Major in the Army and retired from the military. He now works as a police officer in Lexington.”



Above: Toms' 2nd Lieutenant Commission certificate. At right, Toms holds a miniature version of a self propelled Howitzer cannon that his brother Philip made for him as a present after he was commissioned.



While enlisted, Toms earned a number of awards including the coveted Erickson Trophy; presented by the National Guard Bureau, Departments of the Army and the Air Force. It recognizes individuals for their distinguished leadership and academic ability.

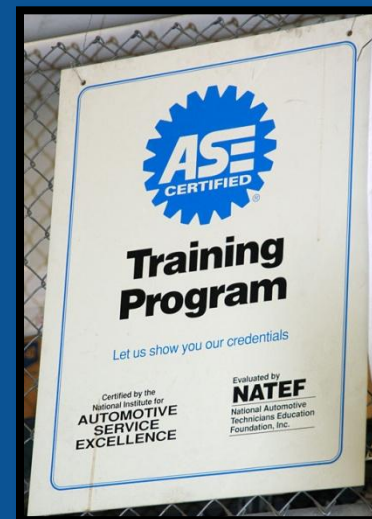
Toms entered into the education field while still enlisted in the KANG. He began teaching industrial education at Logan County High School and served as the school's assistant football coach from 1983-84. From there, he went to Glasgow High School and stayed for the next three years. Parallel to his teaching career, he was also a recon survey officer in the guard. He held different positions in the BN 623 in three of the five battery's. His highest achievement was to serve as Executive Officer for Charlie Battery.

While working for the Glasgow Independent School District, he also coached football at the middle school. His 7th grade team went undefeated and only lost four games during his tenure. His philosophy was "play hard, have fun, and the winning will take care of itself."

In 1988, his former automotive technology instructor and VICA advisor, Joe Harlow, retired from the Barren County AVEC. Toms was encouraged to apply for the position and wanted to try his hand at teaching students his first love – auto mechanics. Principal Max Doty hired him based on work experience. After accepting the job, he became certified as a vocational teacher.

During his 8 years in the classroom, Toms became ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) master certified, advanced engine performance certified, and (through ASE) was an official ASE Team leader to certify other programs in Kentucky as well as Tennessee. (His former program is still ASE certified today.)

Toms enjoyed teaching and because of his competitive spirit had students who qualified for the Ford AAA state contest for 7 years in a row. Additionally, because of his involvement in VICA as a high school student, he also put two years of time in as VICA advisor.



From a professional development standpoint, Toms decided to go back to WKU where he earned a master of arts in education in 1993 and a Rank 1 in 1996. He also became involved in the Southern Region component of KEA for vocational programs and served as the organization's president for two terms. His last term ended right before he became principal of the KY Tech-Barren Co. ATC.

Toms was chosen to be part of a 15-month KY Tech Leadership Academy Program designed to develop new leaders from 1995-96.



Toms:

"The Leadership Academy was a good experience for me and I had had a lot of leadership training through the military.

"Being part of the academy allowed me to look at things differently – specifically from the viewpoint of an administrator. It was beneficial. My mentor was Rebecca Forrest, principal of the Glasgow Health Occupations Center, a postsecondary institution."

Hal Toms became principal of the KY Tech-Barren County ATC when Max Doty retired in 1996. The BRAVE Consortium (Barren River Adult Vocational Education) was also founded in 1996. Concerned parties from local industry, state government, city and county governments, and the Department for Technical Education (DTE) joined together to provide educational opportunities for adults because of the tremendous industrial growth in the Barren County area. According to Toms, "industry folks were a major part of the interview process because of BRAVE." Upon acceptance of the position, the first major hurdle Toms faced was to implement full-time evening programs because of the demand from industry.



At the time, the KY Tech-Barren County ATC was critical in providing customized industry training for business and industry during evening hours. Hal Toms worked as principal during the day and oversaw industrial maintenance, computer skills, and leadership development training programs after school. The industrial maintenance program was offered in cooperation with the Bowling Green Technical College. The whole premise of the initiative was to provide skills training to existing workers and develop a large base of qualified workers.

“In order to provide training, the ATC needed equipment that met industry standards. This was initially done through Bluegrass State Skills,” said Toms. “We received \$200,000 from Bluegrass State Skills and BRAVE.”

In 1997, the Postsecondary Education Reform Act was passed by the Kentucky General Assembly. According to Toms, “we thrived in that environment because funding improved dramatically. Of the \$6 million in equipment funding KY Tech received, our school was given a two for one match to purchase up-to-date equipment. With the \$200,000 from Bluegrass State Skills and BRAVE, our school received an additional \$400,000 from the state for a total of \$600,000. At the same time, the central office in Frankfort became autonomous and we were actually our own entity rather than being the secondary side of an adult program. There were a lot of good things that happened during time.”

The Department for Technical Education orchestrated an event in 2000 to showcase how \$6 million in equipment funding (appropriated during the 1998 general assembly) was spent

for the KY Tech system of schools. Toms was contacted by then DTE commissioner Emil Jezik and showcase director Fran Dundon for help. Overall, KY Tech-Barren County ATC faculty and staff were a major factor in the success of the project. Using new equipment, CAD instructor Ron Zimmerman assisted by drawing up floor plans for the event. Electrical technology instructor Greg Felkins built two new breaker boxes so electricity could be hooked up to large pieces of equipment. This was done because the civic center had never hosted an event of this magnitude and there were no existing provisions to accommodate the massive electrical needs. To solve the dilemma, KY Tech provided the the skills to correct the problem. Additionally, many of Toms' faculty participated in the showcase including machine tool, electrical, HVAC, welding, and CAD teachers and their students.

Governor Paul Patton was so impressed with the event, he went back to the office and appropriated another \$3 million in equipment funding for the KY Tech system of schools.



Official ribbon cutting the KY Tech way: Governor Patton pressed a button on a control board made by students from KY Tech-Shelby County ATC under the direction of industrial maintenance instructor Jim Cash. In the background from left to right is Emil Jezik and Mary Stratton. Righter Dundon assisted the governor during the ribbon cutting ceremony.



Governor Patton looks out over the crowd as former Workforce Development Cabinet secretary Allen Rose addresses the audience. To the right of Rose is Dr. Ed Ford, Patton's cabinet secretary of the secretaries and Emil Jezik, DTE commissioner.

In addition to his positions of automotive technology instructor and principal, Toms has served in many roles over the years. In his capacity as a seasoned principal, he became a Kentucky Tech Principal Internship Program mentor to both Donnie Evans, KY Tech-Warren County ATC (formerly at the KY Tech-Russellville ATC) and Lee Ann Wall, KY Tech-Monroe County ATC. And, KY Tech-Butler Co. ATC principal Ray Hammer was a former teacher under Toms' leadership.



Evans:

"Hal was my principal mentor when I took the job at Russellville ATC. I thought it would be a formality since Hal and I were friends. But much to my surprise, he supplied me with KY Tech policy and procedure manuals, personnel manuals, budget codes, and a lot of good advice on how to run a school.

"We spent every hour that was required for my internship studying and going over that material. I realize now that since Hal is my friend, he wanted to make sure that I did the principal job right. Much of his advice was from experience on how to handle students, staff, parents, and superiors (the do's and don'ts). I am certain that I am a better principal because of Hal Toms.

"I am thrilled that Hal is going to retire so he can trade cars, play golf, travel, and do all those things that he has wanted to do for all these years but didn't have time because of work and family obligations. But, it won't be the same to be at a principals' meeting without my friend there. Hal was a Kentucky Tech student, teacher, and will retire as a KY Tech principal. He is a Kentucky Tech supporter through and through. We, (his friends, colleagues, students, and staff) are all richer for having had him in our lives.

Wall:

"I'm indebted to Hal Toms for being my mentor when I first became a principal. He shared leadership knowledge that directed me through, around, and over those first year challenges. Most often I reflect on his advice of how to encourage and influence people while keeping students at the center of every decision. It's been five years and I still follow that advice every day."



Hammer:

"Mr. Toms has been an inspirational leader who put his students and staff before himself. He is responsible for the success of many students, teachers, and principals in the KY Tech system.

"I appreciate all the help and guidance he has given me."

Barren Co. ATC faculty and staff



KY Tech Barren Co. ATC faculty and staff honor principal Hal B. Toms during a retirement luncheon at the school.

Front row (l to r): Ashley Bell, business and office instructor; Wes Sneed, machine tool technology; Jason Alexander, special needs liaison; Carl Owens, CAD; Brent Claywell, air conditioning & refrigeration technology, and Joni Ferguson, health sciences.

Back row (l to r): Jeff Berryman, welding; Daren Johnson, information technology; Jason Birge, automotive technology; Hal Toms, Pam Morgan, secretary; Greg Felkins, electrical technology; and Terry Blakeley, custodian.



Ashley Bell:

"When thinking back about my experiences at Barren County ATC, one of the most memorable was when we remodeled our school. The cohesiveness and collaboration of our staff and what Mr. Toms did to make that happen will be a permanent memory of mine.

"One day during the renovation process, it was a hot afternoon and we had all been moving furniture, books, and filling cabinets all day. Mr. Toms called us to the front steps. He had brought us all ice cream. We all sat on the front steps of our school, ate our ice cream, and enjoyed being part of something great – a new and modern building.

"Hal Toms has been an excellent principal, a great story teller, and most of all a trusted leader. He will be missed."

Barren Co. ATC faculty and staff



Greg Felkins electrical technology:

"When I started my career in 1994, Mr. Toms was across the hall teaching automotive technology. His compassion for students was exhibited then in the classroom, and now in his role as principal. He has had an impressive record of student successes in the auto industry that speaks for itself. As a school leader, the same hold true. He still understands that our role is not only to educate, but also to illustrate. He has also been a man who demonstrates respect and fairness to faculty, staff, and students – a mark of a great leader."

"On a more personal note, I'll miss him for his sense of humor, for knowing every rock song from the seventies, and more importantly, his friendship. We have been fortunate to have him as our leader."



Johnson and Toms pose with student made art used in the ATC's winning Christmas floats.

Daren Johnson information technology:

"Mr. Toms has been the only principal that I have worked for since starting here 12 years ago. He will be hard to replace. I have always found him to be a very honest and caring person. On numerous occasions, I have seen him give students money for a snack or drink."

"His door has always been open for advice and help with my program. I have learned a lot from Hal and now that I have completed my principal certification, I hope that I can apply some of that advice to my tenure as a principal somewhere."

Barren Co. ATC faculty and staff



Jason Birge **automotive technology:**

"In the 19 years I have know Mr. Toms, I have found him to be a very inspiring person."

"As a teenager, I was enrolled in his program with a desire to acquire a job in the automotive industry. After graduating from high school, Mr. Toms was able to help me obtain job placement as a technician at a local dealership. Over the years, I have made a great career from his help and inspiration, as well as what he taught

me in the classroom. Now, I am honored to be the new automotive technology instructor at this school – in the same position that Mr. Toms once held. I hope to be as helpful and inspiring to my students as he was and has been to me."

Jeff Berryman **welding:**

"Mr. Toms is a very professional man and all students are treated fairly. I've been at this school for just over a year and he made it a smooth transition for me."

Joni Ferguson:

"Some of my favorite memories of working with Hal Toms revolve around his generosity. I have seen him get up from his desk dressed in a white shirt and tie, and go out to the parking lot to help a student with his or her broken down car. He once helped a student 'nurse' her car along for two years and even helped her find a solution for a leaky roof."

"Many times I've gone in to ask for guidance in a situation with a needy HOSA student, only to walk out of his office with cash from his own wallet. A common site in our school has been Mr. Toms buying students a snack or drink because they did not have any money and were hungry. I will miss him and his tender heart toward the monetary needs of our students."

Doug Alexander:

"For two years, I have worked as the ECE liaison at the Barren County Area Technology Center. In this short amount of time, I have come to know what a fine person and principal Hat Toms is. I've been a teacher for almost twenty-six years now and worked under several principals. He has helped me in so many ways. I learned very quickly that if his students or staff were in need for anything, he was the kind of person that would give the shirt off his back to meet their needs."

Question and Answer Session with Hal Toms

Question: How did you become interested in vocational education?

“On the Toms side of my family, there were some great tradesmen to emulate. My grandfather and two uncles were mechanics and owned garages. My father was a skilled mechanic prior to becoming an Exxon gas and oil distributor in the 1960’s. Because of a hard working family environment, I grew up not only learning about cars and trucks, but working on them too. From an early age, mechanical equipment interested and amazed me.

“While growing up, I can remember my older brother buying and working on several muscle cars. It was appealing to me to see cars that could perform well. He and my dad taught me a lot about engines and general mechanics. When I turned 16, my dad bought me my own 57 Chevy for \$125.

“My interest in the automotive field was sparked by the environment that surrounded me. I was interested at an early age and absolutely hooked when I got my own car.”



Toms standing by old Chevrolet photographs that he purchased at a sale. He framed the car photos and displayed them in his office.

Question and Answer Session with Hal Toms

Question: What do you consider to be your most important contribution during your tenure in CTE?

“I would like to think that providing opportunities for young people to change their lives has been my most important contribution during my tenure in CTE.”

Question: In looking over your experiences, what major goal(s) did you achieve?

“Our facility was originally built in 1974. When I became principal in 1996, it was my goal to renovate the school. Around 2001, I was allowed to make a presentation to the Barren County facilities committee. As a result of that meeting, the planning committee and subsequently the Barren County board approved a \$1.4 million dollar renovation. This renovation made our building look more like a modern training facility and our image continued to move in the same direction as our goals – that of being backed by business and industry standards.”



Toms standing in front of renovated building.

Question and Answer Session with Hal Toms

Question: What do you consider to be the most important issue facing vocational-technical education today?

Funding. The basic tenet of technical education is learning by doing and the programs we provide require money to offer students the hands-on training they need to become industry certified.

If we continue to lose funding, it is my belief that many students will not benefit from our programs.

Question: What do you think people will remember you by?

I hope they will remember me as a person that treated everyone fairly and one who followed through on what I said that I would do.



Question and Answer Session with Hal Toms

Question: Can you tie in any outside activities with your vocational-technical activities and /or endeavors?

"I have always had a great interest in the automotive field. Over the past 30 years, it has been a hobby of mine to buy and sell collector cars. I'm very lucky to have a shop where I can build and restore transmissions, rear-ends, and various other components for old muscle cars. My plan is to continue this endeavor on a larger scale in retirement."



While his future holds much travel, endless rounds of golf, and growing his automotive business, Toms will also take time to enjoy his grandson Jacob. He is the son of daughter Amber and husband Korey Judd. Amber works for Ingram Industries as an internal auditor in Nashville, TN. Hal's twin sons have both embarked on successful careers. Jonathon is a 1st Lieutenant in the Air Force and William works for Colonial Claims in Lexington.

On Friday, July 29, 2011, Hal Toms will walk out of the KY Tech-Barren County ATC feeling satisfied that he was able to provide sound leadership for his faculty, staff, and students as well as lead his school (on many occasions) to attain uncommon results. Accepting responsibility, having an outstanding work ethic, providing service to his country, and understanding the real value of vocational education have been the backbone in his successful career.

Editor's Note:

To my old friend - working with you has been a pleasure and I have always known you were as good as your word.

You are not only a team partner for the good of the whole, you are also a sparkling individual who understands how to reach valued goals.

Wherever you go and whatever you do, your success will be measured because you have the momentum to move in the direction of your goals.



The KY Tech-Barren Co. ATC after the 2004 building renovation.



Good News Story #354

By: Fran Dundon

July 21, 2011

**Office of Career and Technical Education
Education and Workforce Development Cabinet**